

REMARKS

In accordance with the foregoing, claims 1, 12, and 20 have been amended, claim 11 has been cancelled without prejudice or disclaimer, and claims 1-10 and 12-20 are pending and under consideration. Support for the amendments to claims 1, 12, and 20 can be found, for example, at paragraph [0027] of the specification. An interview was conducted on March 27, 2008, the results of which are discussed at the appropriate sections below.

No new matter is presented in this Amendment.

REJECTIONS UNDER 35 U.S.C. §101:

Claims 1-11 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §101 because the claimed invention is directed to non-statutory subject matter. Claim 11 has been cancelled without prejudice or disclaimer; the rejection of claim 11 is thus moot. During an interview conducted with the Examiner on March 27, 2008, the Examiner indicated that the amendment to claim 1 would be sufficient to overcome the rejection of claims 1-10 under 35 U.S.C. § 101. Accordingly, the applicants respectfully request that the rejection of claims 1-10 be withdrawn.

REJECTIONS UNDER 35 U.S.C. §§ 102 and 103:

Claims 1-5, 7-8, 10-16, 18 and 20 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by Maeda et al. (U.S. Patent 6,072,759) (hereinafter, "Maeda"). Claims 6 and 17 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Maeda et al. (U.S. Patent 6,072,759) as applied to claims 1-5, 7-8, 10-16, 18 and 20 above, and further in view of Ohno et al. (U.S. Patent 6,628,602). Claims 9 and 19 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Maeda et al. (U.S. Patent 6,072,759) as applied to claims 1-5, 7-8, 10-16, 18 and 20 above, and further in view of Kondo (U.S. Patent 6,600,716). Claim 11 has been cancelled without prejudice or disclaimer; the rejection of claim 11 is thus moot.

As to the remaining claims 1-10 and 12-20, during the interview conducted on March 27, 2008, the Examiner indicated that the amendments to the independent claims 1, 12, and 20 would be sufficient to overcome the rejections of record. Accordingly, the applicants respectfully request that the rejections of claims 1-10 and 12-20 be withdrawn.

CONCLUSION:

There being no further outstanding objections or rejections, it is submitted that the application is in condition for allowance. An early action to that effect is courteously solicited.

Finally, if there are any formal matters remaining after this response, the Examiner is requested to telephone the undersigned to attend to these matters.

If there are any additional fees associated with filing of this Response, please charge the same to our Deposit Account No. 503333.

Respectfully submitted,

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